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WEST EUROPEAN SEAL MATRICES FROM COLLECTION OF NICOLAY LIKHACHEV

The article discusses the corpus of West European seal matrices kept at the Scientific Archives of St. Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Previously, they were part of a collection of academician N. P. Likhachev (1862–1936). In the course of attribution we have found three matrices which seem to be absolutely identical to those from the museum collection in the town of Bassano del Grappa, Italy, which previously belonged to the Count Antonio Maria Luigi Calzamatta (1827–1905). This enabled a clarification of the earlier history of the two collections, which proved a genealogical connection with the collection of Count Giovanni Lazzara (1621–1690). This collection was so well known that Christina, Queen of Sweden, wanted to buy it. Evidently after the death of Giovanni Lazzara collection was sold to the Cabinet of Louis XIV (The Cabinet of medals of the French National Library). However, this theory is not justified. In another version the collection was bought by Nicolas-Joseph Foucault (1643–1721), politician and honorary member of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres. After changing several owners, Foucault's collection came in 1727 in the cabinet of medals, except the seals. At the same time, some of the matrices from Lazzara's collection are kept nowadays in the Bottacin Museum in Padua. Most likely, the seals did not leave Italy, and N. P. Likhachev acquired his matrices there, but not in France. Since he visited Italy often in person, there are no traces of this acquisition in his archives.

A brief excursus in the history of the St. Petersburg collection revealed that some of the matrices have survived in two or even three copies. Since a matrix is with only rare exceptions a unique object, the need to verify the authenticity of the matrices became evident. The matrix of Ottokar II, King of Bohemia, was chosen for analysis. Based on the comparison with available images of his stamps, measurements and the study of the reverse of the matrix, it was concluded that we are probably dealing with a copy made in the second half of the 19th century by scientists or antiques dealers. Refs 39.

Keywords: archival sciences, collections, antiques trade, sigillography, seal matrix, Ottokar II, N. P. Likhachev, falsification.

For citation: Nosova E. I. West european seal matrices from collection of Nicolay Likhachev. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. History*, 2017, vol. 62, issue 2, pp. 267–276. DOI: 10.21638/11701/spbu02.2017.204

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ЗАПАДНОЕВРОПЕЙСКИЕ МАТРИЦЫ ПЕЧАТЕЙ ИЗ СОБРАНИЯ НИКОЛАЯ ПЕТРОВИЧА ЛИХАЧЕВА

В статье рассматривается корпус западноевропейских матриц печатей, хранящихся сегодня в Научно-историческом архиве Санкт-Петербургского института истории РАН. Ранее все они входили в собрание академика Н. П. Лихачева (1862–1936). В процессе атрибуции было выявлено совпадение трех матриц с экспонатами сфрагистической коллекции музея в г. Бассано-дель-Граппа (Италия), ранее принадлежавшей Антонио Мария Луиджи Кальзаматта (1827–1905). Это дало возможность прояснить более раннюю историю обеих коллекций, которая оказалась генеалогически связана с собранием графа Джованни Лаццара (1621–1690). Эта коллекция была настолько известна, что ее желала приобрести королева Кристина Швед-

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The research was supported by *Russian Foundation for the Humanities* (RGNF) (project No 14-01-00088). My sincere thanks go to E. A. Buluchevskaya who translated this article into English and to A. Lobanov for his corrections of the language.

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ская. Есть сведения, что после смерти Джованни Лаццара коллекция была продана в Кабинет Людовика XIV (будущий Кабинет медалей Французской национальной библиотеки). Однако эта теория не оправдалась. По другой версии, коллекцию купил Никола-Жозеф Фуко (1643–1721), политический деятель и почетный член Академии надписей и изящной словесности. Сменив несколько владельцев, коллекция Фуко попала в 1727 г. в Кабинет медалей, но печати там не обнаружены. В то же время некоторые матрицы из коллекции Лаццара находятся сегодня в Музее Боттачин, в Падуе. Скорее всего, печати не покидали пределов Италии, и Н. П. Лихачев приобрел свои матрицы именно там, а не во Франции. Поскольку он часто бывал в Италии лично, то в его архиве не осталось следов этого приобретения.

Результатом экскурсии в историю петербургского собрания стал тот факт, что некоторые матрицы существуют в двух или даже трех экземплярах. Поскольку матрицы, за редким исключением, представляют собой уникальный объект, стала очевидна необходимость проверки подлинности матриц. Для анализа была выбрана матрица Отакара II Пржемысла, короля Богемии. На основании сопоставления с имеющимися изображениями его печатей, замера матриц и изучения оборотной стороны был сделан вывод о том, что перед нами, вероятно всего, копия, изготовленная во второй половине XIX в. в среде ученых или коллекционеров. Библиогр. 39 назв.

Ключевые слова: архивоведение, коллекционирование, торговля антиквариатом, сфрагистика, матрицы печатей, Отакар II Пржемысл, Н. П. Лихачев, фальсификации.

“Before the Great War philately (stamp collecting) attracted an incredible number of amateurs, ranging from babes to billionaires to kings. Without any exaggeration, a damaged stamp became international currency”. This is what the academician Nicolay Likhachev said, speaking before a large audience of the Russian Society of bibliophiles in Moscow on 26 June, 1925 [Likhachev 1991, pp. 194–195]. N. Likhachev himself was a passionate collector who left a collection which he called a “diplomats exhibition”. The purpose of this exhibition was presenting the history of the document in the whole diversity of its external and internal forms. The enterprise was intended to be a laboratory for the specialists in the sphere of auxiliary historical disciplines, where they could study the original documents [Klimanov 2012a, pp. 36–37]¹.

One of the components of this exhibition were seals as an integral element of the document during a long period of its development. The sphragistic part of Likhachev's collection has become one of the most well-studied fragments of this extensive corpus of documents, and N. Likhachev himself laid foundation of these studies². The Western European part of the sphragistic collection was described by [Klimanov 1999]. However, for the unknown reasons this researcher did not include in his catalogue the seal matrices also present in the collection [Matritzy pechatey]. The present article aims to fill, at least to a certain degree, this gap³.

¹ On the scientific activities and the collection of N. Likhachev, see: [“Zvuchat lish' pis'mena...” 2012].

² N. Likhachev published extensively on sphragistics. For bibliography of his writings, see: [Prostovolosova 2002].

³ We allowed ourselves to leave outside the scope of this article a number of Russian seals, as well as items of unknown purpose, which are definitely not matrices of seals. For example, there were discovered eight seal matrices of Russian origin of the 18th–20th centuries, three medals in honor of Carl Ernst Baer's (1792–1876) earning a doctorate in medicine in the Derpt (Tartu) University. In addition, there are eight fragments of rings, which can be identified as seal ring judging by the inscription on the box in which they are stored, though such attribution still has to be attested, since engraving on the rings' flats are not deep, so they seem unlikely to leave any clear impressions on wax. Finally, among the seals in the Collection 54 there is a metal box with the Sforza family coat of arms. Thanks to the similarity with the analogous sample in the funds of the State Archive of Florence [Seal of Francesco Sforza, s.d.], it can be assumed to have served for storing a wax seal, originally not protected by a box or something else.

The origin of the collection

The matrices can be surely identified with Likhachev's collection for a number of reasons. First, the Western European section of the Archive of the SPb IH, RAS was formed based on this collection with only a few exceptions. No other collector whose documents supplemented the Western European section⁴ had shown any interest in sphragistics. This cannot be said of N. Likhachev, who is considered to be the founder of Russian sphragistics [Stepanova, Sotnikova, Klimanov 2012, p. 298]. Thus, the presence of matrices in his collection looks more than reasonable. Secondly, it has been proven that the other items from the Collection 54 belonged to Likhachev [Klimanov 1999, p. 12–19; Nosova 2012]. Thirdly, one of matrices now deposited in the Archives was published by Lichachev who indicated that it belonged to his collection [Likhachev 1899, part 1, p. XLVI]. Finally, one of the matrices is rolled in a paper with an inscription made in the collector's hand.

It is much more difficult to determine how the matrices came to N. Likhachev, who cooperated with a variety of antique houses all around the world, as well as with individuals [Klimanov 2012b]. N. Likhachev often stored documents in the covers, in which they were sold by the antiques dealers. The comparison of the covers themselves (taking into account the inscriptions, paper color and quality) and the extracts from the auction catalogues glued on them, makes it possible to clarify the origin of the documents. Sometimes Likhachev added the information about the place and date of the document's acquisition with his own hand⁵. Some information of the origin of metal seals and casts was obtained from Likhachev's correspondence. In the case of matrices, no references to their origin have been found to the date either with the objects themselves, or in the collector's archives.

However, during the attribution of the matrices, we encountered a description of a small sphragistic collection kept in the Museum of Bassano del Grappa [Casarotto 1997]. The catalog describes 61 matrices, three of which coincide with those from the Likhachev's collection. These are the matrices of the seals of Ottokar II, King of Bohemia⁶, of *magister* Fasibene di Giovanni⁷ and of a certain

⁴ Along with the collection of N. Likhachev, the collection of the Archaeographic Commission served as source of the West European section. Its materials, however, mostly related to territories of the Russian Empire. A certain number of documents was transferred from the Manuscript Department of the Library of the Academy of Sciences, including those that previously had belonged to the collection of the Pskovian merchant F. Plyushkin (1837–1911). [Putevoditel po arhivu 1958, pp. 3–8, 422].

⁵ For an example of a complex analysis, see [Chirkova 2014].

⁶ Matrix of the seal of Ottokar II, King of Bohemia. 1269–1278. It was presumably only used from 12 July, 1262 to March 1264. — Equestrian seal with a knight. A knight on a horse, a spear in the right hand and a bridle in the left. On the knight's shoulder there is a red (?) shield with the silver (?) fess (the coat of arms of Dukes of Austria) The horsecloth is covered with stars and carries three emblems (on the neck and croup of a horse — a rampant lion, an eagle on the front part of the blanket). Legend: + S(IGILLUM) OTAKARI DEI GRA(TIA) REGIS BOEMOR(UM) QVINTI(AE) MORAV(IAE) MERCHIONIS // AVSTRI(A) E/ ET STIRI(A) E D/UCI/S. Round (Ø 95). Archive call number: NIA SPb IH RAS, WES. Col. 54, op. 10, no. 39. Description of another specimen: [Casarotto 1997, no. P 20]. Imprint: [Sava 1864, fig. 32]. Ref.: [Hrubý 1980]. In describing the matrices we were guided by the recommendations of the International Committee on Sphragistics [Bautier 1990]. We would like to express our gratitude to A. P. Chernykh for his help.

⁷ Matrix of the seal of Magister Fasibene di Giovanni. S.d. It includes a fence, in the center there is a crossbuck, along the edges there are fleur-de-lis. Legend: + S(IGILLUM) FACZABENE MAG(IST)RI IOH(ANN)IS. Scutiform (32 × 26).

Archive call number: NIA SPb IH RAS, WES. Col. 54, op. 10, no. 8. Description of another specimen: [Casarotto 1997, no. P 21].

Ubaldo⁸, of whom nothing but name is known. Taking into account that both collections are small and have no clear thematic unity, this coincidence may suggest a relation between the two collections.

The collection of matrices from Bassano del Grappa had belonged to Antonio Maria Luigi Calzamatta (1827–1905) and was sold to the museum in 1872. Valentina Casarotto noted, describing this collection, that it mostly consists of the copies of the matrices from other collections. Of the three matrixes coinciding with the objects from the Likhachev's corpus, the matrix of Ottokar II appears in the Casarotto's catalogue as unedited. The two others have analogues in Italian collections.

The matrix of Ubaldo was described in a catalog compiled in the 17th century by Count Giovanni de Lazzara (1621–1690), a knight of the Order of St. Stephen. Already in his lifetime, the count was known for his collection [Rassino da Belforte 1650, p. 205]. According to the catalogue, it consisted of some 370 items, including not only seals, but coins and medals as well [Casarotto 1997, p. 160]. Even within the Giovanni de Lazzara's lifetime, Christina of Sweden wanted to buy the collection [Bianchini 1993, p. 405]⁹. The collection is reported to have been sold by the Lazzara's successors to France where it was incorporated in the Louis XIV's Cabinet which became basis for the Coins, Medals and Antiquities Department (Cabinet of Medals) [Meneghelli 1833, p. 10]. However, the studies on the history of the Cabinet of Medals formation make no direct mention of Lazzara's collection [Sarmant 1994]. Attempts at comparing some seals from the Lazzara's collection¹⁰ to those nowadays in the Cabinet of Medals [Médailles et Antiques]¹¹, have not confirmed this assumption. According to other sources, a part of the collection had come to the museum of Verona, but there was found only a single impress of one of the seals which had belonged to Lazzara [Bianchini 1993, p. 405, app. 5]. The most probable hypothesis is the acquisition of a part of the collection by Nicolas-Joseph Foucault (1643–1721), a politician and honorary member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres [Vaillant 1700, *epistola*]. In 1719 Foucault sold his collection to his friend Claude Gros de Boze (1680–1753). The latter shared it and sold it in parts: coins entered the collection of Marshal Victor Marie d'Estrées (1660–1737), and the antiquities supplemented the collection of the doctor and numismatist Nicolas Maudel (Mahudel). In 1727 Nicolas Maudel sold his part to the Cabinet of Medals for 40,000 livres [Avisseau-Broustet 2009]. Many items of this collection were found among the objects of the Cabinet of Medals, but not the seals. At the same time, some of the matrices from Lazzara's collection are now in the Bottacin Museum in Padua [Casarotto 1997, p. 161]. It is likely that, in the 17th–18th centuries, ancient antiquities were the main subject of the international antique market while medieval objects were of interest only at the local level. We can suppose N. Likhachev purchased his matrices not in France but in Italy. As he often visited Italy in person, his archive contains no traces of this acquisition.

The matrix of Fasibene di Giovanni is also mentioned in Lazzara's catalog. Perhaps, the very same matrix is in the collection of the National Museum of Bargello in Florence,

⁸ Matrix of the seal of Ubaldo. S.d.: +SALVA SANCTA PARENS UBALDU TE VENERANTEM. A kneeling figure, in profile, turned to the right, with his head uncovered in a monastic robes, in his hands there is a book. Ogival (43 × 26). Archive call number: NIA Spb IH RAS, WES. Col. 54, op. 10, no 4. Description of another specimen: [Casarotto 1997, no. E 35; Sigilli del Museo, no. 410].

⁹ It is unknown whether Christina expressed this intention still being a queen or after her abdication, living in Italy.

¹⁰ The catalog of Lazzara is partly published by Carlo Bianchini [Bianchini 1993, pp. 413–466].

¹¹ The catalog of medieval matrices is published separately by Ambre Vilain [Vilain 2014].

where it came from the collection of Giuseppe Salvadori [Casarotto 1997, p. 157, app. 55]. Thus, if the matrix of the Ottokar II exists in at least two copies, then the matrix of Fasibene di Giovanni has three copies: in Florence, Padua and St. Petersburg.

So, comparing two small collections, we have discovered the coincidence of three matrices. Since a matrix is, with rare exceptions, an object which exists in a single instance [Delgrange 2011, p. 61], one cannot but wonder about these objects' originality. Presumably, like the matrices from Calzamatta's collection, the matrices from the collection of N. Likhachev may also be copies. What means do we have to distinguish them from the originals?

Originals, copies, imitations and falsifications

Throughout the Middle Ages, the seal was the main way to authenticate document in Western Europe [Roman 1912, pp. 2–3]. It is not surprising that the attempts of forging the seals were undertaken simultaneously with their expansion. In spite of the heavy punishment (the forgery of a royal seal was considered as lese-majesty and was punished by death in medieval France [Baudin 2003]) there are a few cases of the seals' falsification necessary for the production of forged documents. Later, with the nascence of antiques collecting and the development of sphragistics as a scientific discipline, copies became made to enlarge private collections and for scientific purposes. Such copies were no longer used to falsify the acts, and existed without connection to the documents they were placed upon. Only in rare occasions such copies were marked with special signs, for instance, the French Society of Sphragistics put on the back of their copies the letters "AF. SS" (Arthur Forgeais¹², Société de Sphragistique) or SSP (Société de Sphragistique, Paris) [Delgrange, p. 65].

Efforts of falsifiers and copyists, medieval and more recent, provided the researchers with a significant number of matrices, the originality of which has to be questioned. Thus, M. Pastoureau has suggested that the share of imitations in the matrices collection of the Cabinet of Medals of the National Library of France reaches 40 % [Vrai ou faux 1991, p. 126]. A comparison with other pieces may help to identify a low quality falsification, since a falsifier often did not care about precise reproduction or did not have at hand an original to compare with¹³.

It is much more difficult to identify the copies made using a wax impress or an original matrix. These models are almost identical to the originals, with only a few peculiarities. Firstly, as the metal cools, the copy shrinks by some 3 % on average or slightly less [Delgrange 2011, p. 72]. Secondly, unless the matrix had been deepened with a cutter, then the relief would be less deep than in case of the original. Thirdly, if the moulage is made after a wax imprint, then it should have traces of defects (chips, flaws) characteristic of the prototype piece [Delgrange 2011, p. 74]. Moreover, reproducing the matrix from a wax print, a forger had no sample for the reverse. If the matrix was used for making a false document, then its reverse was of no interest for the falsifier: the identity of the front side was enough. If he did "finish" it, according to his own considerations, this often lead to

¹² Arthur Forgeais (1822–1878), founder of the French Society of Sphragistics.

¹³ For instance, the collection of the NIA of the St. Petersburg Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences holds a forged seal of Pope John (without specification), Landon and Callixtus III. The first two only vaguely resemble papal bulls, and the seal of Pope Callixtus is made up of images from the front side of the original seal of Pope Paul II and the papal curia in Avignon [Klimanov 1999, p. 170]. In Russia, sometimes, any item with the image of the coat of arms (coin, etc.) could be used as an imitation of seal. Of course, such fakes were quickly recognized [Voznesenskaya 2016, p. 151].

anachronisms. In particular, in the 12th century matrices were supplied with a ring that was apace with the matrix itself. From the 13th century it was soldered on the reverse side, so it was no longer visible in the print. In the late 13th century the matrix had acquired a conical shape crowned by a ring. From the middle of the 14th century double matrices came into use: two shields, one of which was a bit smaller in diameter, were connected with a hole by a “sleeve”. Finally, in the middle of the 15th century folding handles appeared [Delgrange 2011, pp. 75–78].

In recent years sphragistics experts have considered using various methods of analyzing the chemical composition of the alloys [Diederich 2002, p. 125]. However, not a single document is known which would set the rules for the production of alloys for seal matrices. For a long time, the content of zinc was the criterion for dating the alloy: medieval technologies did not permit to reach over 28 % of zinc in the alloy [Werner 1970]. However, this criterion is far from absolute: if the proportion of zinc is small, there is still no reason to assert that a metal does not correspond to medieval technologies, and therefore identify a matrix as a 18th–19th century copy. This method seems of even lesser use in view of recent studies, which have shown us that medieval masters could achieve 40 % of zinc in the alloy [Welter 2003]¹⁴. Therefore, the authenticating of matrices is a difficult task better solved by an integrated approach, combining all possible methods.

The Matrix of Ottokar II¹⁵

The possibilities of analysis and interpretation are often determined by the availability of previously accumulated information. From this point of view, the King of Bohemia, Ottokar II, is a more promising candidate for analysis than Ubaldo, about whom we know nothing but name.

Ottokar II was born around 1233. He spent almost all his reign in the confrontation with Habsburgs, resulting with the Ottokar II's defeat and his death in 1278 in the Battle on the Marchfeld (at Dürnkrut). By now, researchers know seven different variants of Ottokar II's seal [Hrubý 1980; Kuthan 1996, p. 435]. A gradual extension of lands made him, like many other medieval rulers, to change his seals frequently, introducing new names into the legend and new heraldic elements into the image. Most often the front side is the seal of majesty, and the back is an equestrian seal with a knight¹⁶. The image of the earliest seal of Ottokar II, which he used from 1247 to 1251, proved unavailable to us¹⁷. However, this seal could not be an imprint of the St. Petersburg matrix, since in the legend of the St. Petersburg's copy, Ottokar II is styled the King of Bohemia, a title which he only received after the death of his father Wenceslaus I in 1253. The closest variant to the matrix from the Likhachev's collection is type IIIa. According to the legend, Ottokar II had to use this matrix after 1253, but until 1269, when he received Carinthia and Craniola at the previous owner's, Ulrich III Spanheim's, will. Carinthia and Craniola are absent in the legend. The earliest surviving print of this seal dates from 15 June 1262 [Šebánek Dušková 1968, p. 406]. From 12 May 1264 to 16 February 1270 Ottokar used another seal. The new seal

¹⁴ The author is grateful to Mr. J.-M. Welter, who kindly presented his article.

¹⁵ See: fig. 1 and fig. 2.

¹⁶ For more details on the established typology of West European seals, see: [Vocabulaire, pp. 151–163].

¹⁷ It is stored in the State Archives of Brno under the number of Tišnov Y II 1.



*Fig. 1. The printing matrix of Ottokar II, King of Bohemia.
Front side
[Archives of SPb IH RAS, WES, col. 54, op. 10, no. 39]*



*Fig. 2. The printing matrix of Ottokar II, King of Bohemia.
Profile
[Archives of SPb IH RAS, WES, col. 54, op. 10, no. 39]*

was almost identical to the previous one, except some modifications in the image¹⁸. Perhaps the old seal was lost, so he accepted a new one. So, the available impresses indicate that the matrix with such an image actually existed. But where is this matrix today: in St. Petersburg or in Bassano del Grappa?

Originally, we assumed that the matrix of type IIIa came to Russia, and the type IV to Italy. However, this hypothesis was not confirmed. In V. Casarotto's article, the matrix

¹⁸ Firstly, on the matrix of type IIIa, the foot of the rider closes one of the three arms on the horse's blanket, and on the matrix of type IV, this defect is eliminated. Secondly, on the type IIIa the plumage on the helmet is shorter. Thirdly, the flagstaff is located on the old seal almost vertically, and on the new one it is at an angle [Sava 1864, pp. 262–263, fig. 32, 33].

of Ottokar II is not reproduced, but judging by the transcription of the legend, the author describes a matrix completely identical to the one in St. Petersburg one, and not of the next type. The fact is that with the general similarity of the matrixes, the inner circle of the legend on both images is interrupted in different ways by the horse's hind feet, which extend beyond the boundaries of the image and invade the space allotted to the legend. Therefore V. Casarotto could not describe the matrix of type IV in any way¹⁹.

The depth of the relief of the St. Petersburg matrix seems insufficient for a good impression, but this is difficult to affirm, since the grooves are covered with patina. However, V. Casarotto points out that the diameter of the matrix from the Bassano del Grappa Museum is 97 mm, while the diameter of the matrix from the collection of N. Likhachev is 95 mm. The difference is 2.06 %, as in the case of segregation. Finally, the matrix's handle from the collection of Likhachev is made in the form of a rib with three rounded peaks (see Image 2), whereas at the end of the 13th century it was made in the form of a ring. The handle in the form of a rib was characteristic for copies made for scientific or collectors purposes in the second half of the 19th century²⁰.

Instead of a conclusion

Thus, by comparing all the evidence, it can be stated that the authenticity of the matrix of Ottokar II is a subject to doubt. Most likely, we are dealing with one of the numerous copies intended for collectors or scientists. The winning argument was the analysis of the reverse side of the matrix. On the basis of the same criterion, it is necessary to recognize as a duplicate the matrix of Rudolf I Habsburg, also available in the collection of the Archives of the Institute of History [Archives of SPb IH RAS, WES, col. 54, op. 10, no. 38]. Equally, other matrices from the collection of N. Likhachev, especially those that coincide with the matrixes in Bassano del Grappa, need similar verification as well. At the same time, it was not uncommon when an object considered a falsification, on a closer view proved to be an original, which, in certain particular circumstances, did not correspond to the existing tradition and therefore prompted suspicion [Morelle 2010]. However, before proceeding to a detailed analysis, it is necessary to describe the whole complex and to catalogue it.

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¹⁹ Type IIIa: + S(IGILLUM) OTAKARI DEI GRA(TIA) REGIS BOEMOR(I) QVINTI MORAV(I) MARCHIONIS // AVSTRIE / ET STIRIE D / VCI / S. Type IV: + S(IGILLUM) OTAKARI DEI GRA(TIA) REGIS BOEMOR(I) QVINTI MORAV(I) MARCHIONIS // AVST / RIE ET STIRIE D / VCI / S.

²⁰ The author expresses deep gratitude to Mr. Dominique Delgrange for consultations in this matter.

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Received: 17.01.2017

Accepted: 22.05.2017